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# Being female an advantage in job, says former CIA spy

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NEW CANAAN — For Eleanore Hoar of Oak Street, the business of being a spy did not resemble the cloak-and-dagger thrillers portrayed on television or in novels.

"If you were ever in a situation like the people on television, you were in big trouble, or as we used to say, in a 'flap,'" said Hoar.

The New Canaan grandmother of four was a contract intelligence officer for the Central Intelligence Agency during the 1950s.

Gay Courter, author of the novel "Code Ezra," a thriller focusing on Israel's female agents, found in her research that many intelligence officers feel that women make better spies. Hoar agrees that women have the advantage in the espionage game.

"Women are so resourceful and clever," she said. "Not only can they use their womanly wiles to get information, but they have greater imaginations and are more subtle than men."

Hoar became interested in the intelligence field after her husband, Sherman, was hired by the CIA while he was teaching at Amherst College in Massachusetts.

"I just had the desire to work for the agency," she said.

The Hoars' first assignment was in Manila, the Philippines. Later they were transferred to Hong Kong to spy on China.

Her first role in the CIA was to make it seem as if her husband was not a spy.

"It was like holding down two jobs," she said. "You had to stay alert to the fact that you were living your normal life and also living the life of a spy."

According to Hoar, the two lives sometimes overlapped.

"I remember doing business with my son at my side," she said. "It made for the perfect cover. Who would suspect a female agent with a little boy in Hong Kong?"

One of Hoar's duties was to protect classified information in her possession and to serve as a liaison between the local headquarters and a larger intelligence unit based outside of China.

"We used to do the old matching bag trick," she said. "I would exchange bags with another agent in broad daylight, right out in the open."

Hoar said being a spy, in a way, was like any other job. "Sometimes it can be very dull. On some days you just sit, waiting to do something, and on other days it's fascinating."

She defended the CIA, saying the agency has received undeserved abuse.

"The president or the National Security Council can't make one foreign policy decision without information," she said. "The CIA plays a vital role in the gathering of such information."

Even though she felt that she was a success, her job was a thankless one.

"No one ever said, 'Good job, Eleanore,' and because I was never told the details of the entire mission I happened to be working on, I never knew if they were successful," she said.

The Hoars divorced after they returned to the U.S. in the 1960s, and Hoar is now involved in another intelligence operation. She tutors students at the Addison Center in Southfield Village in Stamford.